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FLORIDA TODAY NATION

Curry quiet about possible Alabama job

FLORIDA TODAY Wires

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. —Georgia Tech coach Bill Curry declined to say Saturday whether he had agreed to become head football coach at Alabama, but he sent word to reporters not to miss a news conference today at the Tuscaloosa campus.

Meanwhile, Duke Coach Steve Sloan, a former Alabama quarterback who had interviewed for the athletic director's job at his alma mater, called a staff meeting late Saturday afternoon.

Before the meeting, one of his assistants, Tommy Bowden, said Sloan was "leaning toward taking it."

State Coach Bobby Bowden, who was the first person interviewed for the Alabamma coaching vacancy. But the elder Bowden took himself out of contention Friday night.

The scramble for a new coach and athletic director at Alabama began Wednesday when Ray Perkins announced he was resigning after more than both the Crimson Tide and the Southeastern Conference school to become head coach and vice president of operations for Tampa Bay of the National Football League.

Perkins led Alabama to a 10-3 record and a ninth-place ranking in The Associated Press college football poll in his final season.

University President Joab Thomas, who heads the search committee

In addition to interviewing Curry on Friday, the search committee also met with Alabama's interim head coach, Jim Fuller, but Fuller said he was not made an offer

Sloan also met with the panel on Friday. The 42-year-old Alabama graduate, who has been a head coach since he was 28, had said earlier that he was not interested in returning to his alma mater as head coach, but he had declined comment on the athletic director's job.

Tech Athletic Coach Bobby Bowden issued a statement Friday night saying he was withdrawing his name.

director and head football coach, which had been held by Perkins and his predecessor, the late Bear Bryant, would be divided because they were too much for one person.

Curry, 44, returned to Atlanta Friday night after meeting with the Alabama search committee in Birmingham. At the time he said he was unsure that he was "very happy here at Georgia Tech. But everybody I know is the business said I would be a fool not to listen to Alabama."

On Saturday, Curry issued a statement saying, "I simply can't comment" on the Alabama coaching job, but he did send reporters word about the news conference.

nation director at Alabama, confirmed Saturday that Thomas could have a news conference at p.m. today. "He's expected to agree both positions," Atchison said.

Thomas could not be reached or comment Saturday. Richard Sigmon, chairman of Alabama's department of athletics and a member of the search committee, declined comment on whether Curry and Sloan would be joining the Alabama athletic program.

In seven years at Tech, his alma mater, Curry has compiled a record of 51-43-4, including 5-5-1 in 1986.

Curry has not been tainted by an NCAA investigation, which is

Arizona A.D. begins new-coach search

FLORIDA TODAY Wires

TUCSON, Ariz. — University of Arizona athletic director Cedric Dempsey said Saturday that he personally will conduct a search for a successor to Wildcats football Coach Larry Smith, who resigned Friday to accept the job at Southern Cal.

Dempsey said he wants a replacement with

"We believe we can find a coach with current or previous (NCAA) Division I-A head coaching experience," Dempsey said.

Several names already have surfaced as possible candidates. Among them were Coach Hayden Fry, Florida's Gators Hall, South Carolina's Joe Morrison, Air Force's Fisher DeBerry, Indiana's Bill Mallory, Boston College's Jackie Bickford and Bill McCartney of Colorado.

However, former Arizona assistant coach Moe Ankney is said to be gaining support in the Tucson area for the vacant job.

Ankney, 46, was a Wildcat assistant for six seasons and coached many of the players on Arizona's roster.

This year, he coached Bowling Green to a 5-6 record in his first season.

"I haven't talked to anyone at Arizona yet. But yes, I'm interested," Ankney said. "I don't want to campaign for the job. I think the people in charge there will make a wise decision. And if I'm the one they want, I think that's a wise decision."

Green scores Spalding victory

CARMEL VALLEY, Calif. — Ken Green survived a double-bogey start on the final round Saturday and shot a par 71 for a one-stroke victory in the $250,000 Spalding Invitational.

"I wanted to make it interesting," Green said later, joking about his rough start.

Don Pooley and Willie Wood, two other tour stars playing in the non-tour event, tied for second. They closed with rounds of 66 and 64, respectively, on the rainy day at the Carmel Valley Country Club course.

Green, who won $317,000 on the tour in 1986, picked up $50,000 in unofficial money for his Spalding victory. He had a 72-hole total of 274, finishing the tournament with a bad cold and a three-day growth of beard.

■ Results, 11C.

Top seeds roll in junior event

PORT WASHINGTON, N.Y. — Sixth-seeded Carrie Cunningham of Livonia, Mich., outlasted Erica O'Neill of Colts Neck, N.J., 6-4, 7-5 in a two-hour match Saturday to win the Girl's 16 title in the Port Washington International Tennis Junior Championships.

Top-seeded Sabine Appelmans beat Caroline Van Renterghem 6-4, 6-4, in the all-Belgium Girl's 14 final.

In the Boy's 16 title match, No. 3 Vladimir Petrushenko of the Soviet Union rallied for 4-6, 6-0, 6-3 upset of second-seeded Andrei Cherkasov, also of the Soviet Union. No. 8 Dirk Dier of West Germany beat Bill Kyriakos of Brazil 7-6, 6-4 for the Boy's 14 championship.

In the semifinals of the Boy's 18, top-seeded Jonathan Stark of Evergreen, Colo., outlasted Austin Brice of Britain 6-2, 6-1 to advance to the final against Ricardo Camargo of Brazil. Camargo earlier beat Eduardo Furtado, also of Brazil, 6-7, 6-1, 6-4.

Sixth-seeded Olga Tharbopoulou of Greece, the only seed remaining in the Girl's 18 field, overtook Mara Eyckenboom of The Netherlands 4-6, 6-2, 6-4. Tharbopoulou will oppose Brenda Schultz of The Netherlands, who defeated Petra's Paloma Collantes 6-2, 6-1.

USA's Jeffrey leads diving meet

LAS PALMAS, Canary Islands — Debbie Fuller of Canada and Patrick Jeffrey of the United States led the standings for women and men after the opening round of the two-day 13th International Las Palmas city diving tournament Saturday.

In women's springboard diving, Fuller led the standing with 459 points, followed by Mary Fishback, United States, 443; Anke Muhlbauer, West Germany, 425; Laura Schermi, Italy, 415; and Giuliana Aor, Italy, 410.

In men's high diving, Jeffrey led the standing with 597 points, followed by Piero Pinci, Italy, 544; Domenico Rinaldi, Italy, 534; Frederic Pierre, France, 506; and Oscar Bertone, Italy, 500.

An estimated crowd of 1,000 watched the 18 women and 15 men from nine countries who are taking part in the tournament which ends Sunday.

Turfway ends year on high note

FLORENCE, Ky. — Turfway Park concluded its year-long meeting with wagering up by 33.1 percent and attendance increased by 21.4 percent over last year, officials of the thoroughbred racing track said.

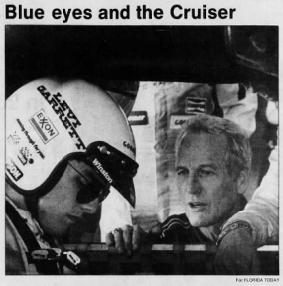
This year's average daily figures were 4,016 fans wagering $630,689, compared with 3,306 betting $485,050 a year ago, officials of the northern Kentucky track said.

Overall, 196,480 fans wagered $17,157,126 on this season's 26 racing programs at Turfway Park. Last year, 81,094 patrons bet $14,725,775 on 32 racing programs, officials said.

■ LAUREL, Md. — Center Box kept her undefeated record intact by winning the $56,700 Dancealot Stakes on Saturday at Laurel Race Course.

Ridden by Mark Sellers, the 3-year-old filly registered her third victory by drawing away to a three-length margin over Arctic Cloud and finishing a mile in 1:39.

Blue eyes and the Cruiser



For FLORIDA TODAY

THE COLOR OF RACING: Seasoned sports car racer Paul Newman gives racing neophyte Tom Cruise, left, a few pointers before Cruise heads out on Daytona International Speedway's high banks for some hot laps Saturday afternoon.

Hollywood hot laps

Newman, Cruise get their racetrack kicks at Daytona

By Dan Cobb
FLORIDA TODAY

DAYTONA BEACH — Under the bright lights of Hollywood, Tom Cruise is bold and daring, a kid with the polish and pizazz to swoon millions of adoring fans.

Cruise, who ... in ... hottest movies at 1986, Cruise could crash his car into a wall, light his pants on fire and do a flip at 70 mph, flying in the seat of his pants and always breaking the rules, only to find the ultimate flirt with disaster.

"I feel the need," he said in the movie, "the need for speed."

Under a bright Florida sunshine Saturday and far away from the lights, camera and action of the cinema, Cruise was flabbergasted by some of man's other toys of danger — race cars.

"This definitely gets your attention," he said with voice still trembling after making his first run around Daytona International Speedway.

Cruise and fellow *The Color of Money* star Paul Newman, another box office hit last year, tinkered with stock cars here in an informal, unannounced appearance. They were here to have "fun only" Cruise said and both made full use of their deep-rooted desires to be a race driver.

They came at the invitation of Rick Hendrick, a Charlotte, N.C., businessman who owns Winston Cup cars driven by Ricky Rudd, Geoff Bodine and Darrell Waltrip. He promised both stars the run of the track and all the fun they could stand. He kept his word.

"Geez, everyone should have one of these in their garages," said Newman after climbing from a Grand National Pontiac. "Can you imagine driving to work in one of these? Wow, it's something."

Newman had the upper hand over his movieland pal. The Academy Award actor is an established Sports Car Club of America champion, but Saturday offered the 41 year-old star a chance play with a heavier stock car at one of the world's fastest speedways.

Nearly 700 fans sat in the stands during the day, never knowing the yellow and white Pontiac that made more than 50 laps around the track was being piloted by two of the world's biggest film stars.

"I think they're working out something in the engine," said William Bryn, a New York visitor watching the practice session which included Bodine and Waltrip. "That's why it's going so slow."

Actually, there was nothing wrong under the hood. Cruise, a man who feels a need for speed, was trying to get the courage to push the gas pedal to the floor.

"When you come up on the turns, you have to convince yourself you're going through with it," Cruise said.

The more Cruise ran, the better he got. His speeds topped 150 mph, then 165.

Waltrip pushes new car to Daytona's fastest lap

By Dan Cobb
FLORIDA TODAY

DAYTONA BEACH — Darrell Waltrip posted the new Chevrolet Monte Carlo into garage stall 28 and sat as his engine hissed and puffed. Even with the engine off, the rear axle housing adhesive from the garage area would be deafening.

First to meet Waltrip was engine builder and crew chief Waddell Wilson, a master of Daytona's high-speed trickery. He grinned, then winked as Waltrip looked eagerly for the word.

"Boy, 207.517 ain't bad," Wilson said.

Waltrip shot from the seat like a Roman candle. This was a race car, not a track that has never seen a NASCAR Winston Cup victory, had just opened itself up to the fastest lap of all time. Send out the news, he said, because Darrell Waltrip isn't afraid of Daytona anymore.

"Man, I came off Turn 2 my eyeballs flashed 'Tilt'," Waltrip said. "Never thing I know. I'm already in three and they're flasing 'Tilt' again. I know it was good. It felt good. Everything really felt good. I'm ready to go out there and race right now."

Waltrip's practice lap was in preparation for the Feb. 15 Daytona 500. For the first time in years, he will come back to this 2.5-mile track with the confidence of a champion.

"I didn't even hear the wind," Waltrip said. "I don't know how fast wind is, but I outran it today."

The joining of Wilson and Waltrip may signal a beginning to the best racing effort of the 1980's. Not since the Richard Petty glory days of the mid-1970's has anyone commanded this sport like Wilson and Waltrip, although they worked for different teams. And now, they are together as one.

"Waddell's had a lot of good success here (winning seven poles and three races) and maybe that'll offset the misfortune I've had here," said Waltrip, stock car's winningest driver during the last decade with 68 victories.

Near the end of the afternoon, he was at 175 mph before bringing his quickest circuit at 178.

He pulled into the garage area and was met by Newman.

"Hey, Cruiser, what's up," Newman said.

"Does it mean anything when the oil light comes on?" Cruised asked, only to get the immediate attention of Waltrip.

"When did it come on and what did you do?" Waltrip asked.

"I don't know, I just turned the engine off when I noticed it," Cruise said.

"Son," Waltrip said, "you did good. You might be very lucky right now."

Cruise stamped in his seat, not realizing the light could have been a signal that the engine was about to blow up.

Rough day at sea groups defenders tightly at the top

FLORIDA TODAY Wires

AMERICA'S CUP

FREMANTLE, Australia — The bull-bashing Australians sailed into a storm of protests Saturday that left three yachts within a point of each other to select a defender for the America's Cup.

Kookaburra II, currently the hottest defense candidate, lost on the race course but won in the protest room against Australia IV and entered the AIS Cup Wednesday against Conner.

Four protests were filed after the two boats almost collided and left Australia's green and white spinnaker in rags.

Australia IV was disqualified for violating Kookaburra II's right of way by the international protest jury that deliberated into early Sunday morning. Two protests by Kookaburra II were upheld, one by Australia IV dismissed and Bond's boat withdrew a fourth.

The races saw the departure of Sydney's Steak'n Kidney, whose 5-31 record made it mathematically impossible for her to reach the two-boat defender finals. She left on a winning note, defeating Kookaburra III, but even that brought a protest.

Kookaburra III claimed she should not have been allowed to race at all. That protest was still pending at press time.

Under the two protest flags had been raised, Kookaburra III and Australia IV were atop the standings in a tie, with Kookaburra II one point behind. Kookaburra II has won all but one of her six semifinal races. Her sole defeat was through a disqualification following yet another protest.

Kookaburra II protested Saturday after a near collision on the protest committee ruled that Australia IV had the right of way. Kookaburra II's right of way by failing to honor her leeward position.

It gave the six victory points to Kookaburra II, increasing the boat's total to 64 points.

Australia IV's disqualification cost her undisputed first place and dropped her back into a tie with Kookaburra III with 45 points apiece.

The Australians are in their fourth round-robin, which has been marred by numerous boat crashes.

Kookaburra III's protest claimed Steak'n Kidney "didn't have sufficient points to proceed to the final (round)."

Kookaburra II's defeat lost her undisputed first place after Australia IV's disqualification. Kookaburra II, now 29-8, has lost four of her six races in this last round before the finals. Australia IV is three for six and has alternated being in first or tied for first for the entire series.

Steak'n Kidney could not have made the finals for the last two days, but was allowed to continue racing until she was excused Sunday by the Royal Perth Yacht Club race committee.

Dennis Conner, the man who lost the America's Cup and hasn't forgotten, and Chris Dickson, the boy wonder from New Zealand, are the only skippers left in the battle to determine a finalist to be pitted against Conner for yacht racing's ultimate prize.

Conner, who lost the Cup in 1983 — thus ending a 132-year American hold on the trophy — will match his savvy and his aluminum-hulled Stars & Stripes against the 25-year-old Dickson's fiberglass speedster New Zealand, which has lost just once in 38 races. The best-of-seven series begins Jan. 13.

Conner and Dickson advanced to the challenger round-robin finals by completing 4-0 sweeps of their respective semifinals series. Conner sailed around the course faster, defeating the Italian challenger and USA, while Dickson beat Marc Pajot and French Kiss by 2 minutes, 44 seconds after another smooth sailing job.

NCAA convention kicks off Tuesday

By Tom Winsky
Gannett News Service

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Top college officials gather here this week for the 81st National Collegiate Athletic Association convention, which has been described jokingly as a cross between a national political convention and a prebowl game party.

When the representatives of the NCAA's 1,085 colleges and athletic conferences begin work Tuesday, the increasingly controversial issue of athletic reform is likely to be the major issue confronting everyone.

"We have received an increased amount of attention this past year, but it is mostly the result of things like the tragic death of Len Bias," said Kenneth Weller, president of Central College in Pella, Ia. "But at the same time, I think it is clear that as a group we intend to exert greater control on what emphasis college athletics should be given."

Delegates also will spend two days discussing 132 proposed rules changes, including increasing academic standards, repealing freshman eligibility, opening slightly the procedures of NCAA rule enforcement and requiring coaches to report all athletics-related outside income.

Most officials believe that rather than take major steps, NCAA leaders will use the Dallas convention to set the stage for passage of another set of dramatic reform measures later this year.

Weller said the most serious work will be done by the President's Commission. At issue for the panel is whether to call for a special convention this summer to approve a series of so-called cost-cutting ideas that critics claim are ways to de-emphasize athletics.

The commission is expected to grab most of the attention this week because in recent years it has initiated and then led members to approve major rules changes.

In October, commission members meeting in Kansas City decided that any new cost-cutting steps in athletic programs should be discussed at the annual convention. Among the proposals are banning spring football practice, reducing the length of the team football season to 11 games, restricting playoffs, prohibiting football for some schools and reducing the number of scholarships any sports program can offer.

Commission members also hope more administrators attend as a sign of increased interest. Since its creation in 1983, the commission has focused much of its attention on making college presidents more aware of the problems involved in college athletics and asking them to take greater interest in resolving them.

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